

Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Land Acquisition Grants

PURPOSE

The HCP Land Acquisition Grants program provides funding to States and Territories (and non-governmental organizations through their States and Territories) for land acquisitions that are associated with approved HCPs.

The HCP Land Acquisition program has three primary purposes: 1) to fund land acquisitions that complement, but do not replace, private mitigation responsibilities contained in HCPs, 2) to fund land acquisitions that have important benefits for listed, proposed, and candidate species, and 3) to fund land acquisitions that have important benefits for ecosystems that support listed, proposed and candidate species.

The program received \$6 million in appropriated funds in each of its first 3 years (fiscal years 1997-1999). We received \$15 million in fiscal year 2000 and were able to fund 15 proposals. In fiscal year 2001, we received \$69 million and funded 15 out of 17 proposals. Under this program, the Service has awarded grants for land acquisitions to California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Montana, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

In fiscal year 2002, \$61,306,000 is available for HCP Land Acquisition Grants, and competition for these funds will be at the National level.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for funding under the HCP Land Acquisition program, **a land acquisition proposal must meet all of the mandatory conditions listed below**. If a land acquisition does not meet these conditions, do not submit a proposal for consideration.

1. A proposal must include 25 percent non-Federal cost share (decreases to 10 percent if 2 or more States or Territories are contributors to the proposal and its activities) as per section 6 of the ESA.
2. A proposal cannot include FWS FTE costs.
3. We do not intend to grant funding for projects that serve to satisfy regulatory requirements of the Act including complying with a biological opinion under section 7 of the Act or fulfilling commitments of a Habitat Conservation Plan under section 10 of the Act, or for projects that serve to satisfy other local, State, or Federal regulatory requirements (e.g., mitigation for local, State, or Federal permits).

4. The land acquisition complements, but does not replace, private mitigation responsibilities contained in the HCP.
5. The specific parcel(s) to be acquired with the grant money is identified. NOTE: Evidence demonstrating that the landowners are willing sellers (i.e., a letter or other form of written acknowledgment) will be required prior to transfer of funds.
6. Habitat must be set aside in perpetuity for the purposes of conservation (this can include easements deeded in perpetuity or other similar instruments).
7. The proposal must state a commitment to funding for, and implementation of, management of the habitat in perpetuity, consistent with the conservation needs of the species.

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Only one proposal per HCP may be submitted. However, a proposal may include more than one parcel for funding consideration. For regional HCPs with subarea plans, please submit multiple acquisition proposals under the one regional plan title. The proposal must specifically identify the parcel to be acquired. Proposals that do not identify specific parcels will not be considered. We encourage you to include more than one parcel in the proposal in the event the transaction for the highest priority acquisition cannot be completed; subject to the outcome of fund reassignment procedures, funding of the next highest priority parcel acquisition identified in the proposal may be approved. In addition, acquisition of more than one parcel per HCP may be funded. If you submit more than one parcel for consideration in your proposal, include the relative acquisition priorities for each parcel, the price of each parcel, and the amount of the request (purchase price minus the non-Federal match) for each parcel.

As in previous years, the ranking factors give priority to land acquisitions associated with larger, multiple species HCPs. The ranking factors assign points according to the number of species covered by the HCP (i.e., included in the section 10 permit). In prior years, proposals associated with HCPs that covered one or few species were unable to compete successfully for grants under this program. Again this year, we are setting aside \$5 million specifically for grants to single-species proposals to ensure some funds will be available to support acquisitions associated with single-species HCPs.

Smaller HCPs or HCPs with fewer covered species may also receive special consideration, especially if the acquisition is relatively low in cost and provides high conservation value, therefore, we encourage such proposals. However, the proposal or Regional priority justification must describe the circumstances that warrant special consideration.

States, Territories, or other non-Federal partners will be responsible for ensuring that appraisal and title work are completed. The cost of conducting an appraisal(s) and completing title work,

in accordance with Federal requirements, must either be assumed by the State or a non-Federal subgrantee, or included in the total cost of the proposal.

State administrative costs must also either be assumed by the State or included in the proposal in accordance with Federal requirements.

**HCP LAND ACQUISITION PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2002 EVALUATION FORM**

FWS Regional Staff: Please fill out this form completely.

May attach written explanations for the categories in this form and any additional information.

Region_____

State(s)_____

HCP name_____

Permit number_____

Service contact for more information_____

Acreage of land acquisition (break down acreage by parcel if more than one parcel is proposed for acquisition)_____

Estimated total cost of land acquisition (including management)_____

% of cost to be shared by non-Federal entity (also list entities) _____

Amount of funding requested (total cost minus the non-Federal match) (break down by parcel if more than one is proposed for acquisition)_____

Relative Regional priority for this proposal_____

Justification for Regional priority_____

(Total points available = 100 points.)

SPECIES BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for listed and unlisted species covered by the HCP. Federally listed species are defined as those species listed as threatened or endangered by the Federal Government through section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. Unlisted species include candidate, proposed, State listed and all other species. A **covered species** is any species (listed or unlisted) that is identified on the section 10(a)(1)(B) permit, thus receiving incidental take authorization.

Listed Species

1) Acquisitions that benefit more covered listed species will score higher. Only those federally listed threatened or endangered species that are covered in the HCP and will benefit from the proposed land acquisition should be counted. Listed species that are expected to benefit from the land acquisition but not covered by the permit should not be counted.

Score: Number of federally listed species **covered by the HCP** that will benefit from the land acquisition. (15 points maximum)

- _____ 1 species (1 point)
- _____ 2-5 species (5 points)
- _____ 6-10 species (10 points)
- _____ 11+ species (15 points)

2) Acquisitions that provide greater benefit to covered listed species will score higher. The benefits to the listed species will be considered **major** if, through the acquisition, the majority of the species' range-wide habitat or an essential piece of habitat is protected, a major population necessary for recovery is protected, or major threats to the species are eliminated. The benefits to the listed species will be considered **minor** if, through the acquisition, only a small percentage of the species' range-wide habitat is protected, etc.

Score: Magnitude of benefits for listed species **covered by the HCP** that will result from the land acquisition. (15 points maximum)

- _____ Mostly minor benefits will result for the listed species (1 point)
- _____ A combination of major and minor benefits will result for the listed species (10 points)
- _____ Mostly major benefits will result for the listed species (15 points)

Justification:

Unlisted Species

3) Only acquisitions that benefit more covered unlisted species will score higher. Unlisted species include species proposed for Federal listing, candidates for Federal listing, State listed species, and other species not federally listed as threatened or endangered. Unlisted species that are expected to benefit from the land acquisition but are not covered by the permit should not be counted.

Score: Number of unlisted (including State-listed species), proposed and candidate species for

Federal listing **covered by the HCP** that will benefit from the land acquisition. (10 points maximum)

_____ 0 species (0 points) - **Skip to Question 5**

_____ 1-5 species (3 points)

_____ 6-10 species (6 points)

_____ 11+ species (10 points)

4) Acquisitions that provide greater benefit to unlisted covered species will score higher. The benefits to the species will be considered **major** if, through the acquisition, the majority of the species' range-wide habitat is protected, an essential piece of the habitat is protected, a major population necessary for conservation is protected, or major threats to the species are eliminated. The benefits to the species will be considered **minor** if, through the acquisition, only a small percentage of the species' range-wide habitat is protected, etc.

Score: Magnitude of species benefits for unlisted species **covered by the HCP**. (10 points maximum)

_____ Mostly minor benefits will result for the unlisted species (1 point)

_____ A combination of major and minor benefits will result for unlisted species (6 points)

_____ Mostly major benefits will result for the unlisted species (10 points)

Justification:

Total points for species benefits (sum of 1-4): _____

ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate how beneficial the land acquisition will be for the covered listed and unlisted species.

5) Lands that require little or no management to provide benefits for covered species will score higher in this evaluation factor. This habitat can include occupied or suitable, unoccupied habitat. The level of management expected to be necessary is based on an evaluation of the biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes. Biotic factors include the structure and composition of plant and animal communities. Abiotic factors include soil, hydrology, natural topography, and salinity gradients. Ecological processes include succession, trophic energy flows, and disturbance regimes.

Score: When considered in the context of the surrounding landscape, the land targeted for acquisition contains _____ of the naturally occurring biotic and abiotic components and ecological processes necessary to maintain a fully functioning ecosystem that contains the habitat necessary to support the covered species associated with that ecosystem. (15 points maximum)

- _____ None (0 point)
- _____ Some/Most (8 points)
- _____ All (15 points)

Justification:

6) Land acquisitions that fill in critical components for land protection will score higher (e.g., lands that link two preserves together to reduce habitat fragmentation).

Score: Do the lands proposed for acquisition fill a critical void in the matrix of protected lands, such as a connection between protected areas or protection of a core population area? (15 points maximum)

- _____ To some degree for at least one listed species **covered by the HCP** (5 point)
- _____ To a great degree for one listed species and some degree for one or more unlisted species **covered by the HCP** (10 points)
- _____ To a great degree for more than two species **covered by the HCP** (15 points)

Justification:

Total points for ecosystem benefits (sum of 5-6): _____

FOSTERING HCP PARTNERSHIPS

The purpose of this section is to emphasize the importance of partners in significantly contributing to implementation of the HCP. This section includes consideration of the number of partners and amount of cost share contributions.

7) Proposals with a larger number of significant partners involved in the HCP will score higher. A significant partner is a public or private entity that is a significant player in the implementation of the HCP. For example, they are signatories to an implementing agreement, are signatories to some other agreement regarding participation in implementation, or received their own section 10(a)(1)(B) incidental take permit. Subpermittees or entities receiving certificates of inclusion are not significant partners to an HCP; however, they typically make a contribution toward implementation in return for receiving the benefits of incidental take authorization. If an entity that is receiving incidental take authorization is also contributing toward the proposed land acquisition, an additional point is accrued.

Score: Number of significant partners involved in the implementation of the HCP. (8 points maximum)

- _____ 1-5 significant partners (1 point)
- _____ 1-5 significant partners with contributions toward implementation of the HCP from non-significant partners (subpermittees or entities receiving certificates of inclusion and making a monetary contribution toward HCP implementation) (5 points)
- _____ Greater than 5 significant partners (8 points)

Justification:

8) Commitment to a successful HCP can be evidenced by cost share contributions. Cost share is the percent of the total project cost that will be provided by non-Federal partners. Proposals that include a greater than minimum cost share contribution will be ranked higher. When both the State and local governments are involved, cost sharing by both governments is generally preferred.

Score: Percentage of cost share provided by non-Federal partners. (12 points maximum)

- _____ Minimum 25% (or 10% where two or more States are involved, or 0% for identified Insular Areas) (0 pts)
- _____ Each additional 5% (2 pts)

Total points for HCP partnerships (sum of 7-8): _____

TOTAL POINTS FOR THIS PROPOSAL (sum of 1-8 above): _____